Smyrna Nov 20th 1834

To the Society of Enquiry
on Missions —
— Princeton.

My dear Brethren.

I shall endeavour to remember, in composing this letter, how disgusted I have been, in observing the careless & incorrect manner, in which Journalists often express themselves. If you have read Slade, or Madden you will need no mention of names, by way of instances. A traveller enters a foreign city, entirely ignorant perhaps, of its inhabitants, of their manners & customs or language. He leaves it either but a little enlightened or else grossly deceived & misinformed upon all points. Yet no sooner has he reached home, then he publishes his narrative & is believed! And thus, the result of his transient visit, is to give to his own countrymen very incorrect, & sometimes slanderous impressions, of those among whom he had sojourned. Both Slade & Madden have done great injustice to the Mediterranean Missionaries, among others, whom they have misrepresented. I shall try to avoid a similar error, in speaking of this city & its inhabitants. I feel that I am quite as well qualified to speak of Smyrna, as was Mr Slade, as far at least as ~~m~~ one's own acquaintance with it is concerned — and yet I have been here so short a time, that I feel myself in constant danger of misinforming those to whom I write. I am about to speak unfavourably of this community in respect of their moral character, — not that I delight in proclaiming the faults of any, but that you may know their ~~[illegible]~~ condition & pity & pray for them accordingly. I believe I am not uttering a hasty opinion in announcing that from what I have seen & heard here, I have been convinced of the degraded & depraved state of society in the East, as represented by other Missionaries before me. I think I can state facts, to show that most ~~[illegible]~~ of the ten commandments, are generally & daily & constantly infringed by this community. I would say nothing of the ~~[illegible]~~

I shall expect a speedy and a long reply. I am
anxious to learn of the prosperity of the Seminary
the Church at Princeton & likewise of that of the
College. I hope Mr Hodge's health is better.
Be good enough to present to each of the professors &
their families my most affectionate & respectful
regards. I commend you all Brethren to the grace
of God and of the Lord.
And I am yours in Christian bonds
John B. Adger.

2) worship of pictures in their churches, for I have not been to see any of their ceremonies. But I may state in passing, that ~~or regards~~ since we have been here, at least half a dozen holidays have occurred. Usually these are observed in honor of some saint. I am writing on the Evening of one of these days — the observance of which originated in nothing else, than ~~the~~ idolatrous veneration of men instead of God, and an idolatrous exaltation of human intercessor over the "one Mediator between God & Man, the man Christ Jesus." I have met with no violations of the third commandment hitherto. The Sabbath is awfully profaned. The nominal Christians here, (I mean the Christian sects) close their shops, I believe generally, and suspend their business on that day as they do on any other holidays. But it does not appear to be, that they may hallow & sanctify the Lord's day. ~~The most some~~ From six in the morning until ten A.M. & probably again in the afternoon, there is service, at which many attend, though they do not all go in at the appointed time, but come in from time to time at their convenience. After church, they seem free to do any thing. We meet more of them walking the streets, then, than on any other ~~a~~ day of the week — & more of them pass by our house, not going to church, but walking for pleasure. The best fruits &c. are brought to Market on Sunday, as they anticipate the ~~best sail~~ sale for them. In the afternoons, multitudes of females sit outside of the doors, in this neighborhood, to remark upon the people who pass by, & to be remarked upon in their turn. Every person seems bent on spending the day in as ~~busy~~ merry a manner as possible. As we go to & ~~f~~ come from church, the people are seen idly looking out of their windows, from ~~almost every house~~ every alternate house. I wish, I could say, that the Franks or European settlers ~~were~~ found setting a different example. ~~Alas too~~ There are some honorable Exceptions, but alas too many of them seem to feel entirely free from all restraint, in this foreign land. Oh! what a responsibility is resting upon every European, who visits such a country as this! Let him violate the precepts of that holy religion, which very probably his ~~mother~~ parents taught him from his earliest infancy, & he does it at the risk of dishonoring & disgracing that religion, & provoking the indignation of its divine Author. For he is styled a Christian & a Protestant, here, & they judge of Protestant Christianity by what they see in him & others like him. He is somewhat in the

situation of a professor of religion in America! Would that every ~~sect~~ European here were a genuine possessor & a devoted friend of religion: Then would this people feel its power when they could see a living exhibition of its influence in the daily routine of business. When I was at the Seminary, it was a very common & interesting subject of discussion, whether pious laymen might not with advantage settle in unevangelized countries & so do much good. It is perfectly clear, that if all the Frank merchants here were truly Christian men, they would exert an incalculably beneficial influence. And why might not some Christian merchants be added to their number? I heard it remarked, by one acquainted with this community, that a blacksmith would find a good support here, especially after the first few months.

But to return to the topic at first proposed, — the sixth commandment is regarded here, with inconceivably less reverence than in America. Human life seems, here, accounted of almost no value at all. It is well known that for a very small offence, a subject of this government will be bastinadoed, with five hundred stripes on his feet, (this is not much short of death — or they will make shorter work with him by cutting off his head. This may startle you, — but in a country like this, it is necessary that the government should hold a tight rein over its motley and mutually jealous & often conflicting subjects. What would an easy & timid government be worth, where so many people carry arms by their sides, and will draw them out ~~thus~~ upon a very inconsiderable provocation? There is now a woman in confinement, who two or three nights ago ripped a man open with her own hands. However she was a person of no character. The day before, we heard of the ~~death~~ violent death of three other men. One was shot by accident, and the other two were killed in a personal rencontre — they were Sailors, the one a Maltese, the other an Englishman. A few days after we arrived here, I was standing with Mr Temple & Mr Hallock on one of the wharves attending to some boxes, when we heard a loud crying not far off. It continued and increased, and then there was a rushing to the end of the wharf where it occurred, and presently we saw a boat gliding out and rowing rapidly towards the wharf, where we stood. As it passed by, we saw a wretched sufferer lying in the bottom of the boat, with the blood gushing out of his mouth! He was from Malta & another Maltese in a little quarrel had

& drawn his knife & sheathed it in his breast. The perpetrator of this horrid outrage fled — & no body tried to hinder him. He will probably be absent or be concealed for a few months, & then he can return with perfect safety. No reward is offered for him. No kind of notice is given to the event. Now what sort of moral feeling does this community possess? Remember it is a Christian country so far as concerns a large portion of its citizens. And tho' they can not exercise jurisdiction over such offenders — yet they might evince some horror at such crimes if they felt any. Alas! they feel but little, that is accordant with the spirit of a pure christianity. What would be the feeling ~~of~~ in N.Y. or Phila upon the commission of such a deed there in open day? What a thrill of horror would shoot through every heart. These Maltese, you will remember are Roman Catholics. I would not argue from this one act, ~~or [illegible]~~ that the spirit of that system is bad. But I can not help connecting this fact, with others of a ~~some~~ kindred character & then finding a corresponding verdict against that religion. ~~But~~ It would be hopeless to attempt a communication to you, of the impression on this subject, which you would receive by a residence in a Roman Catholic country. You must see for yourselves, what that system is, by beholding it with ~~[illegible]~~ unveiled face. In America, the terrific scowl & the demon eye, & the devouring jaws & the ~~hot~~ fiery hot breath, are all hidden from public notice! Catholicism among you is masked! I wonder that in argument with them, no one ever seems to dwell much upon this striking and most ~~[illegible]~~ instructive fact — that protestantism elevates a community in knowledge & in virtue; while ~~its dear~~ Romanism debases them to the lowest depth, & roots out from their hearts, almost every vestige of the image of their Maker.

Of course you will not understand me, to apply this remark to every individual of that church, for I ~~consider~~ believe she contains some of God's people. But to return — A few days before we reached Smyrna, a french sailor was killed in open day, by a Greek boatman; — it passed off with very little noise & ~~perhaps we~~ & we never expect to hear any thing more about it. Now I would apply to the Greek religion, the very same observations I have made concerning Popery, only in a less degree of closeness. Because "Popery", I fully believe with Cecil, "is the Master peice of Satan." Mr Temple told me (previously to the murder of the two sailors by each other) that within the nine months he had been here ~~not~~ less than four murders had been committed. You will observe the number has recently increased a good deal. One man, he said, had stabbed another in the open day & in the public street & then wiped his bloody knife by drawing it between his lips! Mr Brewer told me of another, who had deliberately walked into the middle of a group of men sitting on their stools at a coffee house, & there drawn his knife and driven into the body of a certain individual, after which he coolly returned the blade into his girdle and walked unharmed ~~and~~ away. But let me pass on, from this bloody part of my story. It is not necessary, that I should speak of the regard paid here to the 7th commandment — and I would not choose to do so, without having more acquaintance with facts on that subject. Theft is uncommon in one particular shape. Very few instances occur of the breaking open of houses or stores for this purpose. But you dare not trust any thing to your servant about your house; — and you may rest assured of being cheated by him, in the money you send to market. This, I say, you may depend on, as a universally & invariably certain ~~thing~~ event. If you hire a boatman or a Muleteer or a Porter you may be certain that he will charge you more than he ought & you must just give him what you know to be customary & walk away regardless of his loud complaints & demands for more. However, this is less true perhaps of the porters, who are all Turks and therefore rather more worthy of confidence than your fellow Christians the Greeks, Maltese, or Armenians. If you wish to purchase something at a shop, or in the Bazaars, you would not err, at all, to calculate on being charged about one third, more, than the proper price, yea more than the polite & complimenting shop keeper fully designs to accept if he can not induce you to do more. And when alarmed, at your turning round to leave his costly goods, he has called to you to come back, & you shall have them at your own price, you must then keep a sharp look out, or he will contrive to cheat you back again, by false admeasurement, into his own first price. ~~But~~ For an Expert Armenian or Greek, it is nothing to slip the measuring Stick backwards one inch to every

6) paid by giving it a little jerk with his hand. &c

You will not be surprised after all this to be told that falsehood ~~& fals~~ is as common here as the vile mud beneath ~~your~~ feet. What thief or what dishonest tradesman ever yet stopped at lying in order to conceal his first transgression?

And now Brethren what do we feel who are in the midst of these things & what you feel, who hear these things, in reference to the people whom these things characterize? Must we do not transfer our hatred of their vices, over to their persons. Let us only feel the more anxious to "pluck them as brands from the burning", in proportion as we the more clearly perceive, & the more deeply abhor their wretched moral character. How important is it to purify these Christian churches! What obstacles are now thrown in the way of truth by their evil example! And what incalculable assistance would they afford in its propagation, if once restored to the love of it "in simplicity & godly sincerity". In this view of the subject, I feel that my mission to the Armenians is full of solemn responsibility. What manner of man ought I to be, to whom is entrusted a part ~~&~~ in the great work of elevating, & quickening the piety of a corrupt & dead church! I would hardly venture to ask your prayers in my own individual behalf — but Brethren pray for us. And, Brethren, pray for these perishing churches — these benighted, & bewildered, and wandering sheep! What christian heart in America does not throb with emotion at the thought of the present condition of those places where once flourished "the seven churches of Asia"? It is said Homer breathed the air of Smyrna, and dwelt among these beautiful hills, which I see around me. And thinking of it, I am ~~elated~~ conscious of feelings peculiarly delightful. But what was Homer to me? Was Homer a Christian? Was ~~a~~ Homer a Christian Martyr? Am I walking where he deposited ~~he~~ a Martyr's sacred ashes? No! but Polycarp was a Christian, & Polycarp was one of the earliest Christian Martyrs, & Polycarp exclaimed in Smyrna, in this very city, as they led him to the stake, on being urged to deny Christ, "Eighty years have I served him, as my ~~[illegible]~~ Master, ~~& why~~ shall I now blaspheme him! How much interest is given to this spot when one remembers the constancy & ~~blamelesse~~ blamelessness of the ~~ch~~

Early Christians of Smyrna. "The church of Smyrna is represented (Rev II 8-11) as contending with the most severe sufferings — poverty, slander and persecution; but modern Smyrna is a much greater sufferer. The former things are passed away; the faithful Smyrnaeans have long since fought their battle, & won their crown. But now the evils are of a different order — apostacy, idolatry, superstition, infidelity — & their tremendous consequences. On whatever side we look, we meet only with what is calculated to excite painful feelings." [See Hartley's researches in Greece & the Levant.

As a suitable conclusion to such an account of the state of ~~the~~ morals here, you may be interested to know what is the condition & progress of the missions here established. Mr Lewis, as a Missionary of the London Jews Society has been many years in Smyrna. His house, which his private means enable him to keep, with a very open hospitality, is the constant resort of many Jews. He is encouraged with some success in his labours, though I understand, he finds many obstacles to oppose his progress. I was present the other day, when he baptized a young Jew, who has been for some time one of his pupils. He appears to be an ~~inte~~ lad; intelligent [illegible] and was ~~anxo~~ anxious to profess Christ. At the baptism [illegible] kind of a sermon in from another young Jew who gives said evidence of being a sincere disciple. He ~~has~~ suffered every thing but death at Constantinople, in consequence of changing his profession — & afterwards was banished from that place. The sentence of banishment, however, has since been removed. He is quite intelligent and aids Mr Lewis in some of his duties. Mr Brewer is an American Missionary though not connected now with the American Board. His newspaper, was formerly sent to the Society of Enquiry & I presume you still get it. He has an interesting Greek female school. He likewise performs the duties of Seamen's Chaplain for the Am. Seamen's friends Society. Mr Jetter of the Church Missionary Society of London is next in order of time. All these three gentlemen have families. Mr Müller is a single man who has lately joined Mr Jetter. They have two schools in Smyrna ~~have~~ which together contain nearly or quite 150 scholars — one at Boujea, four miles hence, with 170 pupils, and another ten miles off at Vourlah ~~&~~ (an Infant school I believe) with no less than 140 scholars. His schools as well as Mr Brewer's are Greek. The Lancasterian ~~system~~ and the Infant school systems are both used in these schools. Mr Temple of the American Board & Mr Hallock who superintends all their

8) printing operations for this part of the Levant, have been here only a few months, ~~and~~ owing to peculiar circumstances have not yet opened any schools. Mrs Hallock contemplates beginning an Infant school soon. Mr Hallock is preparing ~~the type~~ Armenian type ~~himself at~~ with much ingenuity, but at the expense of infinite labour to ~~him~~ himself. They are very beautiful. None ~~other~~ are to be had elsewhere, except some made in Paris which are exceedingly unpleasant to an Armenian's eye & taste. Mrs Adger and I have taken our first lesson to-day with our Armenian teacher.

You will have heard perhaps ere this reaches you, of the melancholy death of Mrs Thompson at Jerusalem. She was well known formerly to many people in Princeton, having instructed a female Academy there. She died perfectly happy and in the full enjoyment of her reason, although she ~~suf~~ was suffering greatly from inflammation of the brain. Their sufferings at Jerusalem had been exceedingly aggravated, but you will hear of them no doubt from another source. I knew her in some measure, but with him I am intimately acquainted. He was the means of ~~first~~ first & lastingly directing my attention to the claims of foreign Missions.

My dear Brethren, may not some of you find upon a candid & prayerful examination of the subject, that your feet should be turned towards some part of this wretched, this important, this influential, this interesting country? I beseech you delay not to ask what is your duty, until you are ready to leave the Seminary, for then you will be driven into the determination to remain at home. Most heartily should we welcome some of you to this field. May the Lord enable ma[illegible] [illegible] to consider this much neglec[illegible] subject in His fear.

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To the Society of Inquiry —
Theological Seminary
Princeton
N. Jersey
U.S. of America

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